



MARIJUANA AND THE OLYMPICS?

WEED LOVE TO TALK ABOUT IT.

BY: MADELINE O'GRADY, ELIZABETH FOX, AND ELIZABETH HUGHES

SHA'CARRI RICHARDSON "SIXTH FASTEST WOMAN IN HISTORY"



In 2021, Richardson was disqualified from running the 100 meter race with the US Olympic Team after testing positive for marijuana.

AND SHE ISN'T THE ONLY ONE.

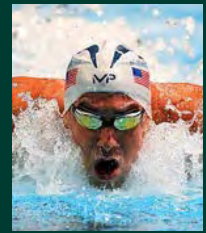
In 2004, marijuana ended up on WADA's International Standard Prohibited List. While Sha'carri Richardson is the most publicized Olympic ban for use of marijuana to date, she was certainly not the first.



Ross Rebagliati
1998 Nagano Winter
Disqualified & stripped of gold; overturned



John Capel
2004 Athens Summer &
Pre 2006 Turin
Banned 2 years



Michael Phelps
Post 2008 Beijing Summer
Banned 3 months &
unsponsored

THE WORLD ANTI-DOPING AGENCY (WADA) CURRENTLY BANS MARIJUANA BASED ON SEVERAL CRITERIA:



The potential to enhance or actual enhancement of sport performance,



The presentation of a potential or actual health risk to the athlete,



And/or the violation of the spirit of sport.

LET'S UNPACK EACH OF THESE.



THE POTENTIAL TO ENHANCE OR ACTUAL ENHANCEMENT OF SPORT PERFORMANCE

A 2018 McGill University study concluded that there is no direct evidence for any performance-enhancing effects of medical or non-medical marijuana.

More research is needed on the potential risks of cannabis use to athletes, but more on this later.



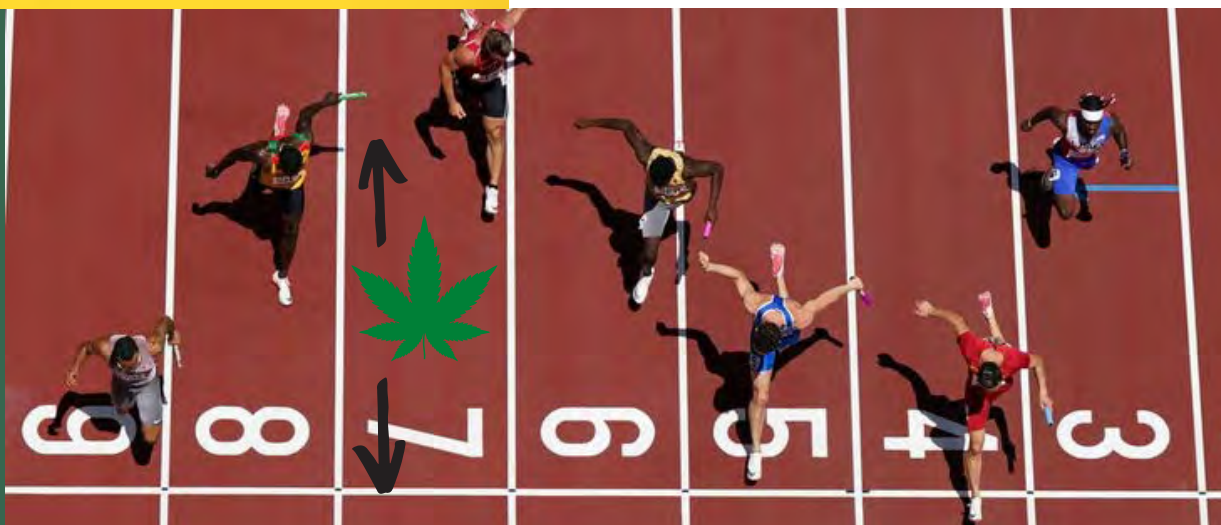
These researchers did however acknowledge the potential benefits of marijuana for **pain management.**



Marijuana may help athletes with **concussion-related symptoms**, but more research is needed.



But does marijuana use really provide a relative (and thereby "unfair") advantage **during** an event?



Though indirect, because marijuana may reduce feelings of anxiety, it could be argued that its use may reduce performance anxiety and thereby disadvantage the athletes that aren't using it. But wouldn't this only happen if an athlete used marijuana *right before* their event, match, or performance?

LET'S UNPACK EACH OF THESE.



THE PRESENTATION OF A
POTENTIAL OR ACTUAL
RISK TO THE ATHLETE

A RISK TO PHYSICAL HEALTH
OR MENTAL HEALTH?



PHYSICAL RISKS OF MARIJUANA USE AMONG ATHLETES

- Decreased cognitive performance
- Potential to alter risk assessment
- Raise in blood pressure
- Pulmonary toxicity

Medical
Marijuana
treats:

- Eating disorders
- Mental health conditions
- Muscle spasms
- Pain

Different sports are
subject to different
risks:

Marijuana use may pose serious risk for bobsledders, downhill skiers, and speed skaters.

Conversely, its use in gymnasts may relieve anxiety surrounding scrutiny about their body image in the public eye.



Simone Biles 2021

Dropped out of Olympics due to mental health

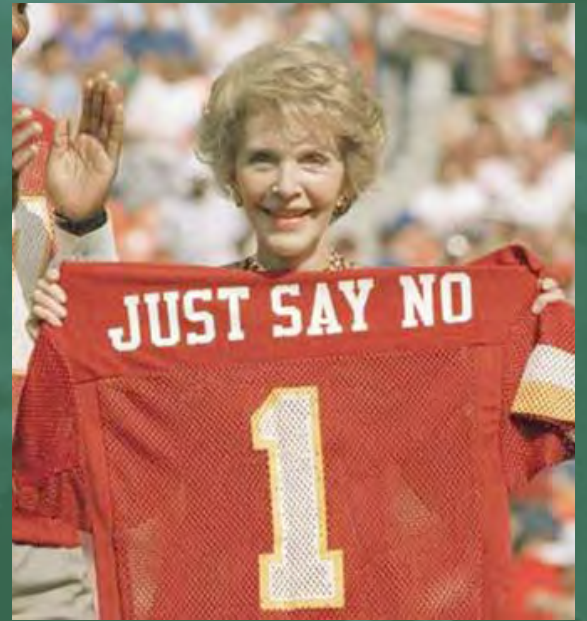
LET'S UNPACK EACH OF THESE.



VIOLATES THE SPIRIT OF SPORTS

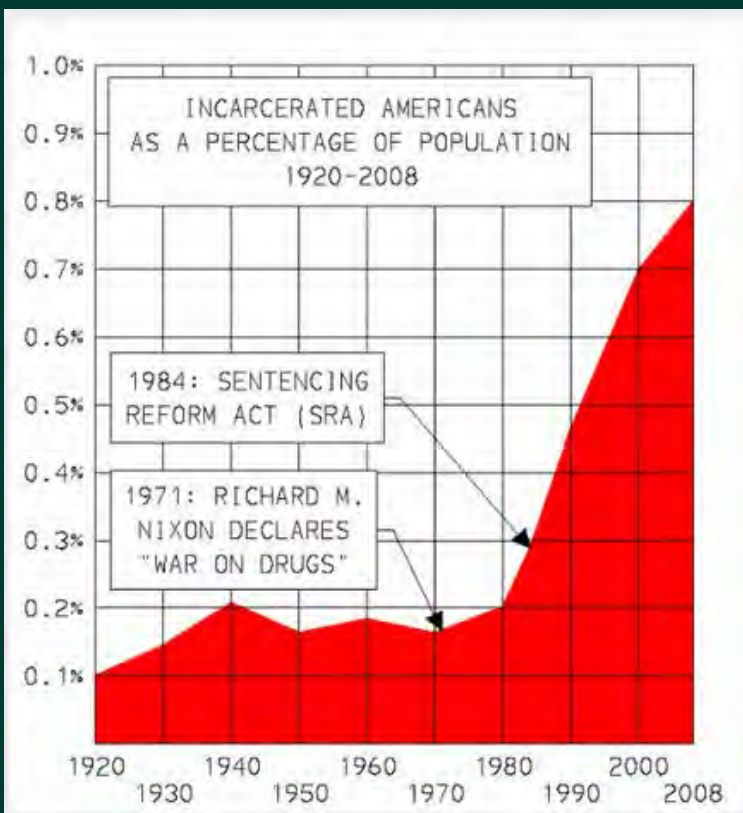
SOCIAL PERSPECTIVE

Marijuana as an illicit drug was part of the reason why WADA in 2011 said its use is "not consistent with the athlete as a role model [visual] for young people around the world."



HISTORY

Weed first became more widely known in the US with the introduction associated with Mexican Immigrants. The passing of the Pure Food & Drug Act (c.1906) spurred the subsequent illegalization of weed in US states.



DISCRIMINATORY ROOTS

Political motivations drove greater punishment for use of weed. This was used as a tool internationally to keep minority groups disadvantaged.

Major pivots leading to international illegalization of cannabis:



International Opium Conference (1911)

Hague Convention (1922)



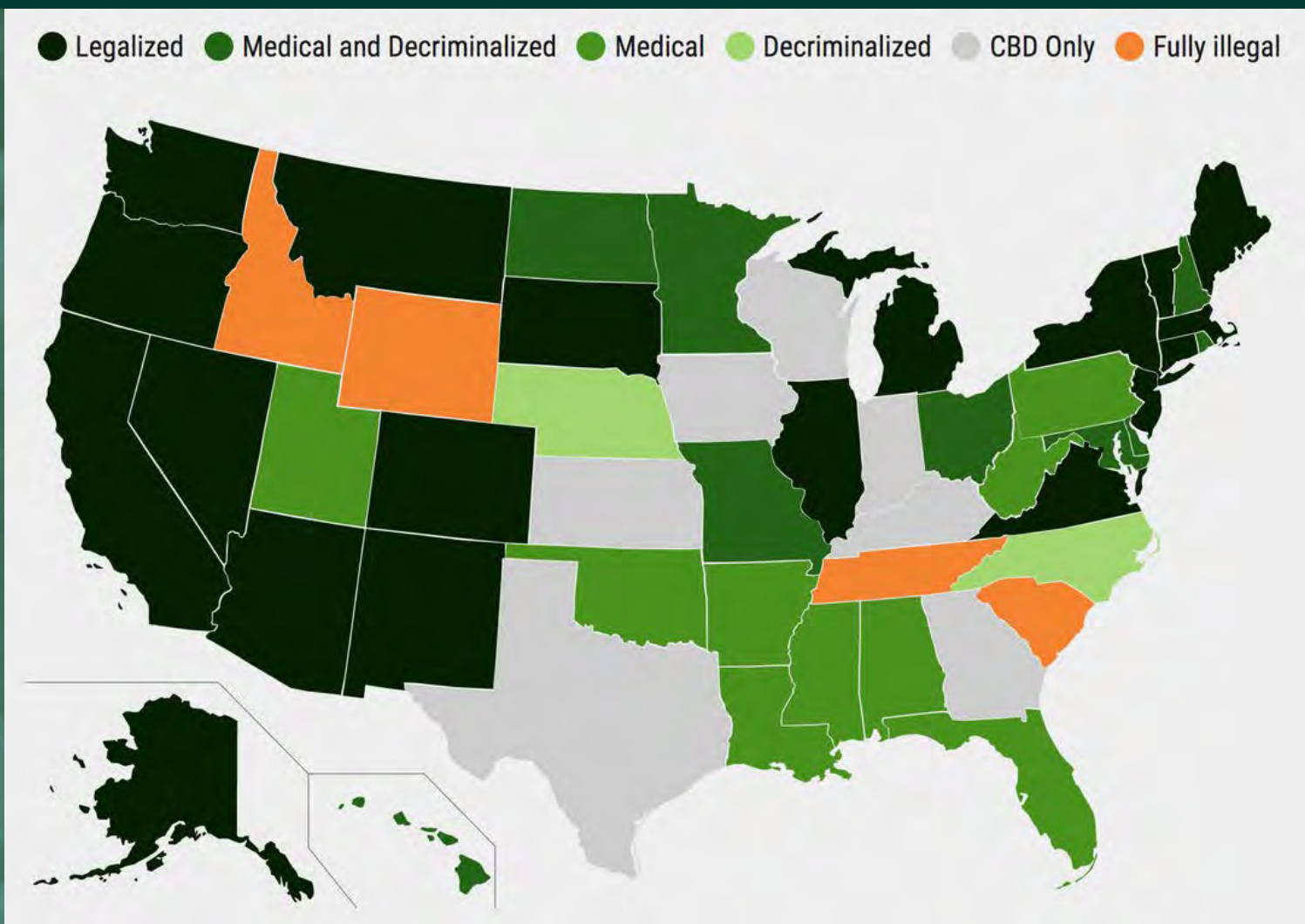
The Gentleman's Club: International Control of Drugs and Alcohol (1975)

However, majority of the regulations passed from 1911 to 1975 were based on little to no hard research.

LET'S UNPACK EACH OF THESE.



VIOLATES THE SPIRIT OF SPORTS

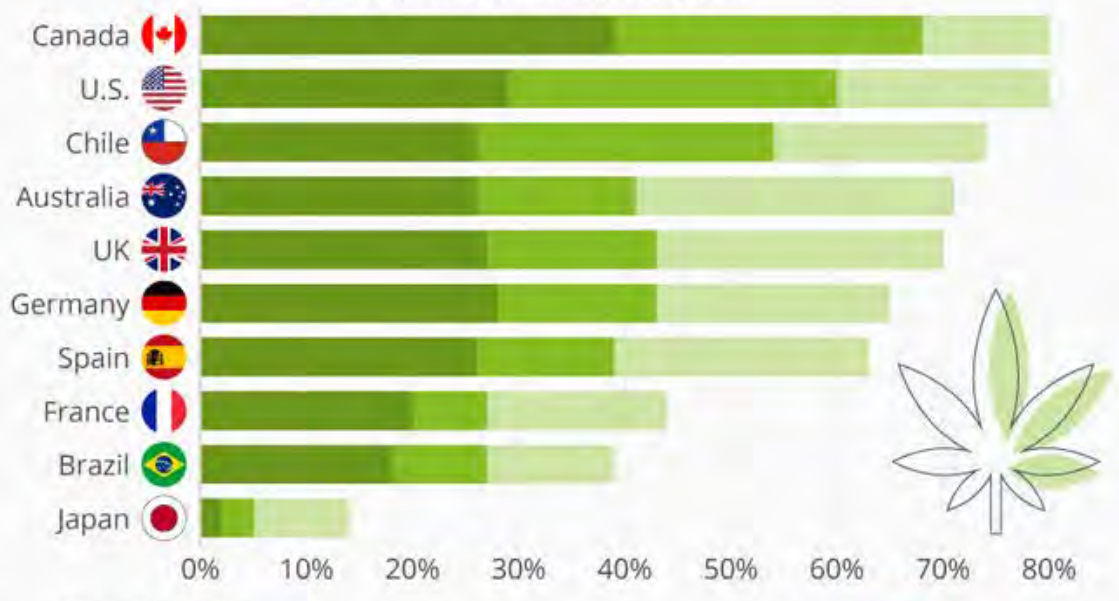


And just as quickly as marijuana became illegal, it once again become legalized. Sentiment towards the drug has taken a major shift in the past decade as seen by many regions' medical and/or recreational legalization.

Which Countries Support Marijuana Legalization?

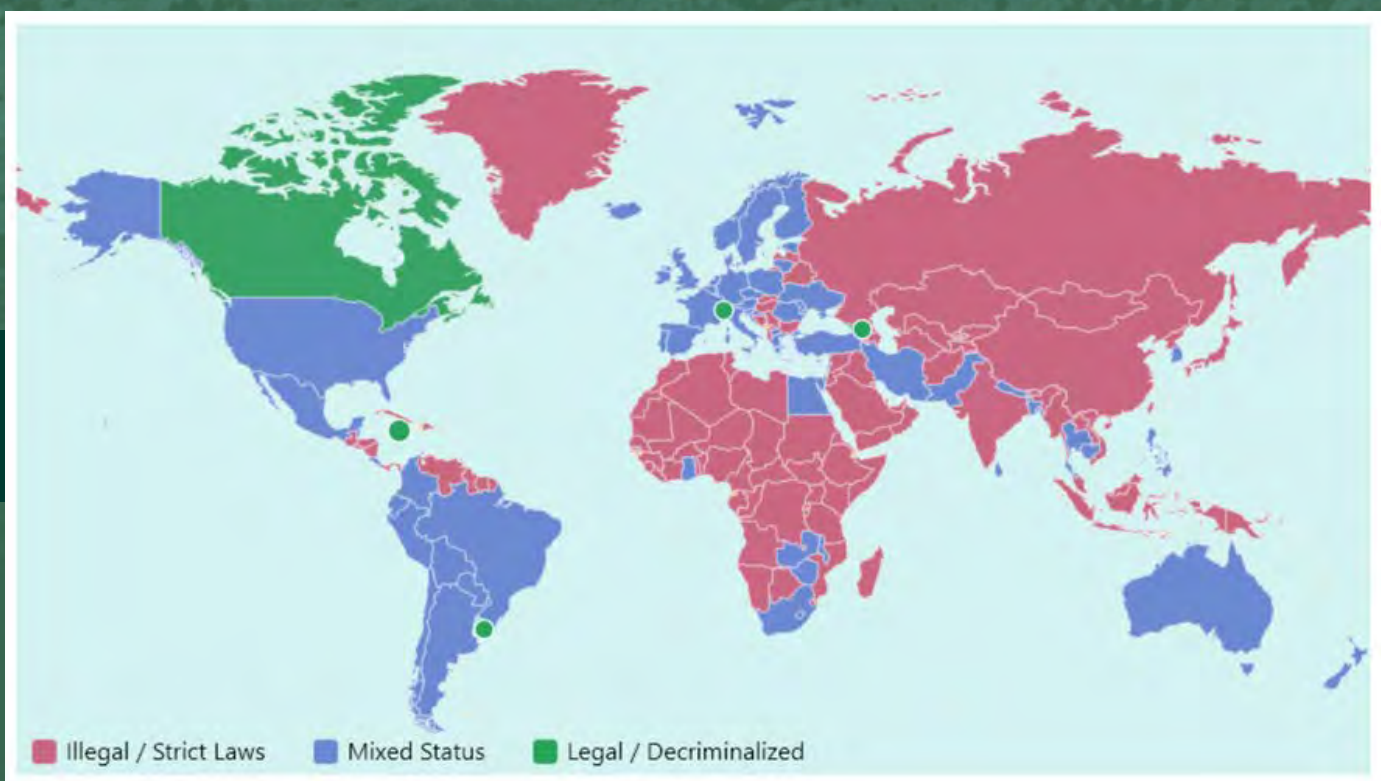
Share of respondents saying that marijuana should be legal under the following conditions

- Legal starting at 18 years old
- Legal starting at 21 years old
- Legal with permit/prescription



Selected countries
Survey of 18,638 persons (16-74 y/o) in 27 countries in Nov and Dec 2018
Source: Ipsos

Logos: @Statista_com, Ipsos, statista



CONCLUDING THOUGHTS

THE POTENTIAL TO ENHANCE OR ACTUAL ENHANCEMENT OF SPORT PERFORMANCE



- No evidence of direct performance enhancement
- May reduce performance anxiety, which would be unfairly advantageous, but also a case for the athlete needing to use cannabis in that moment, making past use inconsequential.

THE PRESENTATION OF A POTENTIAL OR ACTUAL RISK TO THE ATHLETE



- Specific sports pose different risks to their participants
- There are both benefits and risks to using marijuana as an athlete

VIOLATES THE SPIRIT OF SPORTS



- Today, fewer people see marijuana as high risk which corresponds to the increased legalization of marijuana across the globe
- For athletes, it makes it difficult to broadly claim the use of marijuana violates the spirit of sport as it lacks a negative stigma in certain home countries

A STOLEN OPPORTUNITY

America's fastest women was robbed of the chance to showcase her record breaking skills and represent _____ on an international stage. Her use of a relatively harmless drug and punishment that directly resulted in her not being able to compete in the 2021 Olympics, unlike past athletes, will forever change her life.

OLYMPICS

Three months after Sha'Carri Richardson's DQ, WADA announces it will re-examine marijuana as banned substance

Tom Schad USA TODAY

LINGERING QUESTIONS

- Should the WADA ban marijuana on a sport-by-sport basis?
- To what extent does evidence of marijuana use preclude an athlete no longer experiencing its affects from competition?
- Does marijuana have a long-term impact on athletes, and if not, should we be banning them for having used it in the past?